

News Release

Poinsettias Herald Holiday Season for Horticulture Students at U of M Crookston

By Itollefs on Friday, December 3, 2010

Hundreds of rooted poinsettia cuttings arrive in August in anticipation of another holiday season. For seven students involved in the commercial floriculture class at the University of Minnesota, Crookston, those cuttings have developed into a beautiful poinsettia crop under their skill and coaxing.

This year's poinsettias create a beautiful and colorful display including varieties such as Freedom Fireworks, Monet Twilight, Salmon Star and Orange Spice, a new exciting color. Most greenhouses grow a large percentage of red, but the UMC students grow more of the novelty colors.

In the photo are members of the fall semester class including: back row (l to r): Jordan Jacobson, a senior from Thief River Falls, Minn.; Brandon Pinnow, a senior from Minot, N.D.; Mike Field a senior from Spicer and Tammy Cruz, a sophomore from Gary. Front Row: Bethany Jenkins, a sophomore from Grand Forks, N.D.; Tammy Wroblewski, a senior from Milwaukee, Wis.; and Alisha Aasness, a sophomore from Fergus Falls, Minn.



The students started the process of forcing the plants to bloom in time for the holiday season in October. Following a specific procedure to control the light, the students covered the plants with a dark cloth at 4 p.m. and uncovered them at 8 a.m. each day to regulate the length of daylight the plants receive. The students are responsible for greenhouse chores on the weekends as well. Although the class is taught by Sue Jacobson, the crop is in the hands of the students. The work and production of the poinsettia crop is entirely the responsibility of the class. Jacobson says "It's better to learn expensive lessons in school than at your job. We don't fire the students."

The Agriculture and Natural Resources Department offers commercial floriculture as part of the horticulture program to teach students to produce quality plants for a specific date - a skill necessary for employment in a greenhouse or garden center. "Poinsettias form their colored "flowers" when the light is regulated," explains Jacobson. "The poinsettia really doesn't have a blossom like most flowers. Instead, the colorful red, pink, or white petals are modified leaves known as bracts. The blossoms are actually the small yellowish clusters in the center."

Jacobson often allows problems to develop to see how the students will solve them--something they would have to do in an employment situation and giving them an opportunity to apply what they have learned. The class demands hard work, dedication, and a strong team effort to grow the best poinsettias. Leadership and responsibility are two of the qualities that develop in this type of teaching and learning environment.

"Students learn so much from applying their classroom learning to real-world experience," Jacobson explains. "By taking responsibility for the crop, the students are accountable for the outcome making the commercial floriculture class one of the most memorable for the students." The class is excellent training for a career in horticulture, a multi-billion dollar industry in the U.S. To learn more about the horticulture program with emphases in environmental landscaping, production horticulture or urban forestry, visit [www.UMCrookston.edu/academics](http://www.UMCrookston.edu/academics).

Today the University of Minnesota, Crookston delivers 29 bachelor's degree programs, 18 minors, and more than 40 concentrations, including several online degrees, in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of about 1,400 undergraduates from more than 25 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit [www.umcrookston.edu](http://www.umcrookston.edu).

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2900 University Ave., Crookston, MN 56716  
800-862-6466 | 218-281-6510 | [umcinfo@umn.edu](mailto:umcinfo@umn.edu)

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